

University of Dundee

Archives as Memory

Nabizadeh, Golnar; Laird, Catriona; Long, Paul; Saber, Dima

Publication date:
2018

Licence:
CC BY-NC-ND

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Nabizadeh, G., Laird, C., Long, P., & Saber, D. (2018). *Archives as Memory*. UniVerse.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in Discovery Research Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from Discovery Research Portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

ARCHIVES AS MEMORY



Golnar Nabizadeh and Catriona Laird

ARCHIVES AS MEMORY

Archives can be thought of in many different ways – they may be photos, letters, diaries, official records, monuments, databases and other documents. But archives are also people’s memories, personal anecdotes, and shared histories and find expression through artworks that can re-inscribe the past in new and different ways.

This comic describes the story of a family forced to flee from their home to a new place. Their background is not fully defined, nor is it clear what happens to some of the characters the reader meets within the story. Such perilous journeys often mean that valued belongings and possessions must be left behind. What happens to their lives, their stories, and their archives in such circumstances?

Archives signal an end and beginning – by containing the past, they also gesture to the future – and to the unfolding of life in its many guises.

This comic is dedicated to displaced persons around the world and the journeys they have been compelled to take. It takes inspiration from the work of Dr Dima Saber and Professor Paul Long and their work on crowd-sourced citizen archives from Syria.

Thanks to everyone who helped bring this comic together.

Script by Golnar Nabizadeh and Catriona Laird. **Artwork** by Catriona Laird.
Booklet production by Catriona Laird and Golnar Nabizadeh.

THE OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY DEFINES
'ARCHIVE' AS BOTH A NOUN AND A VERB.

Archive:-

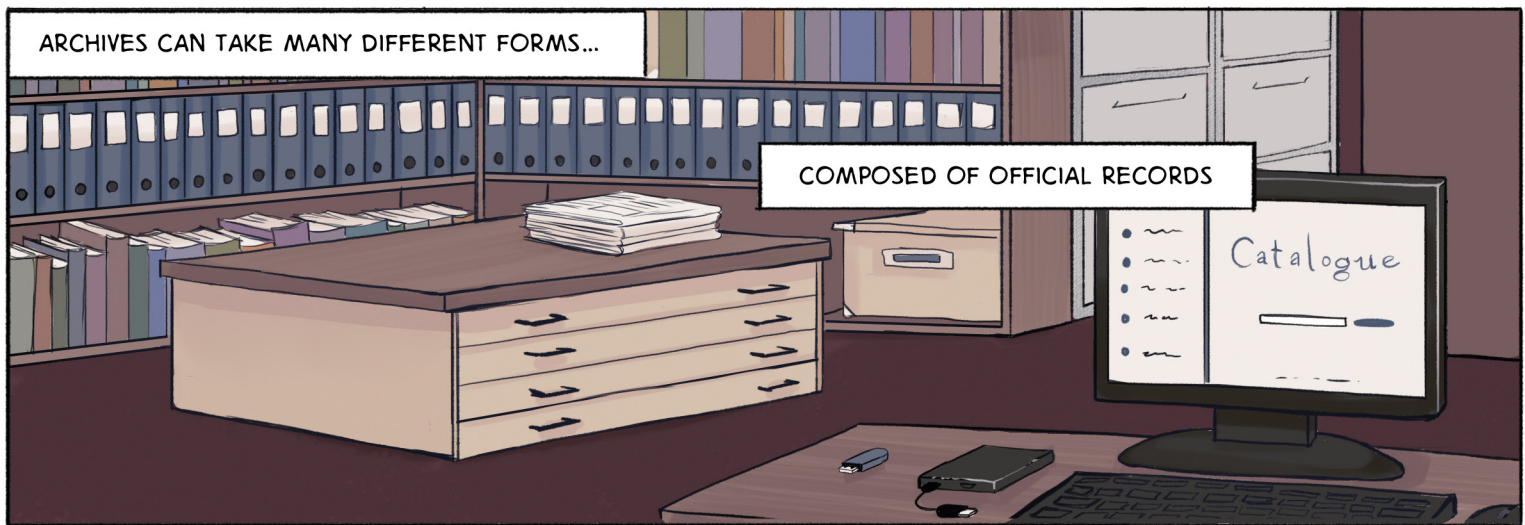
noun

a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

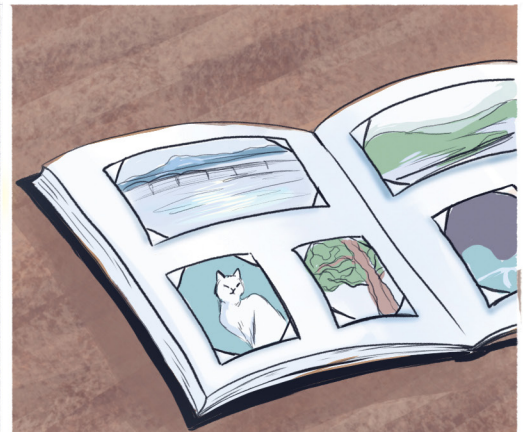
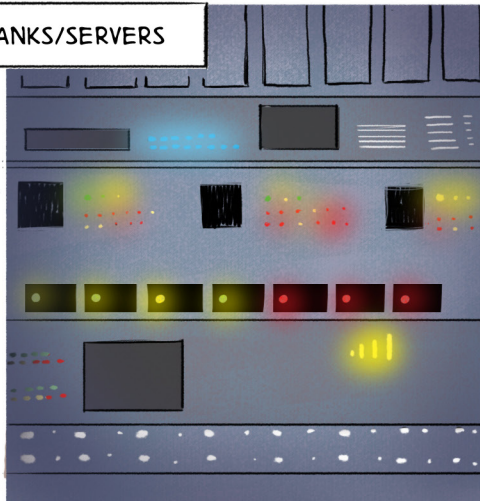
verb

to place or store (something) in an archive.

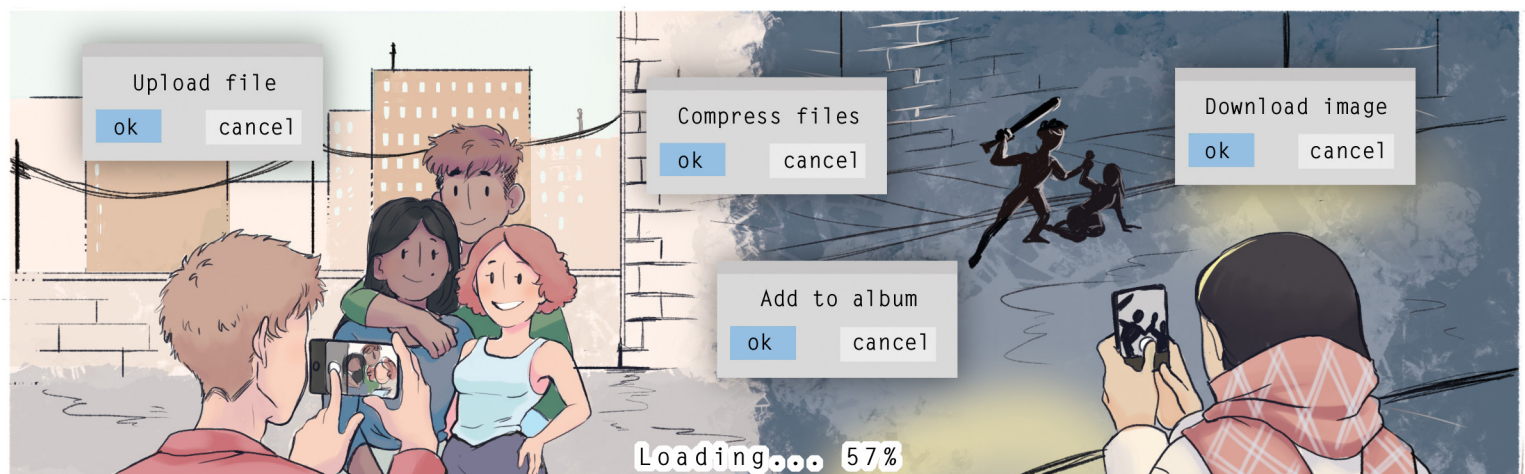
ARCHIVES CAN TAKE MANY DIFFERENT FORMS...



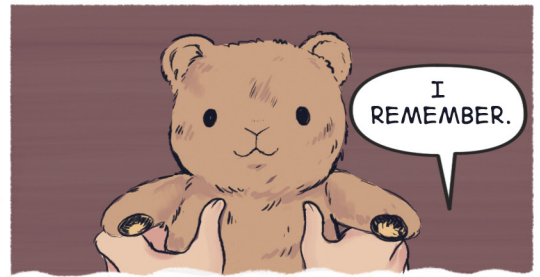
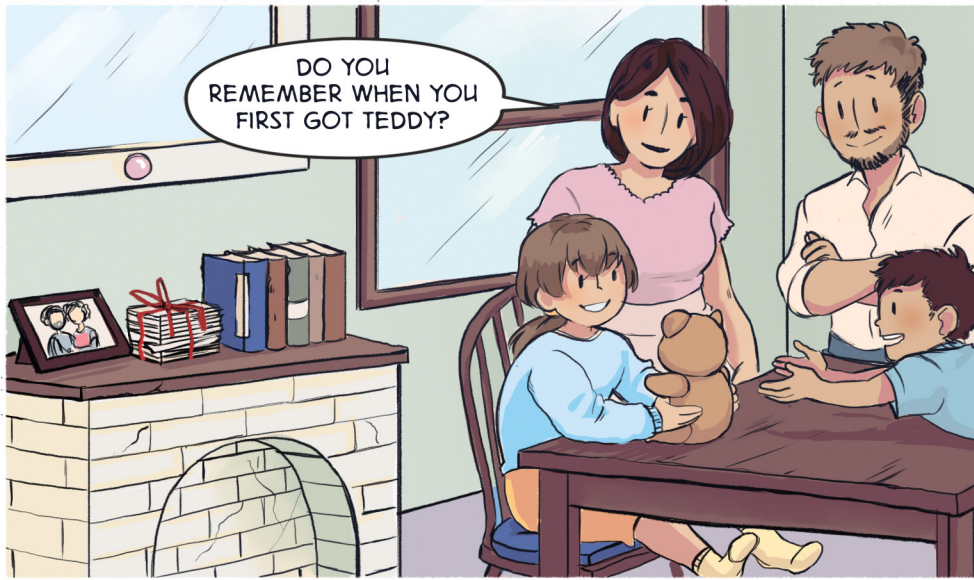
STORED IN MUSEUMS, ONLINE, DATA BANKS/SERVERS



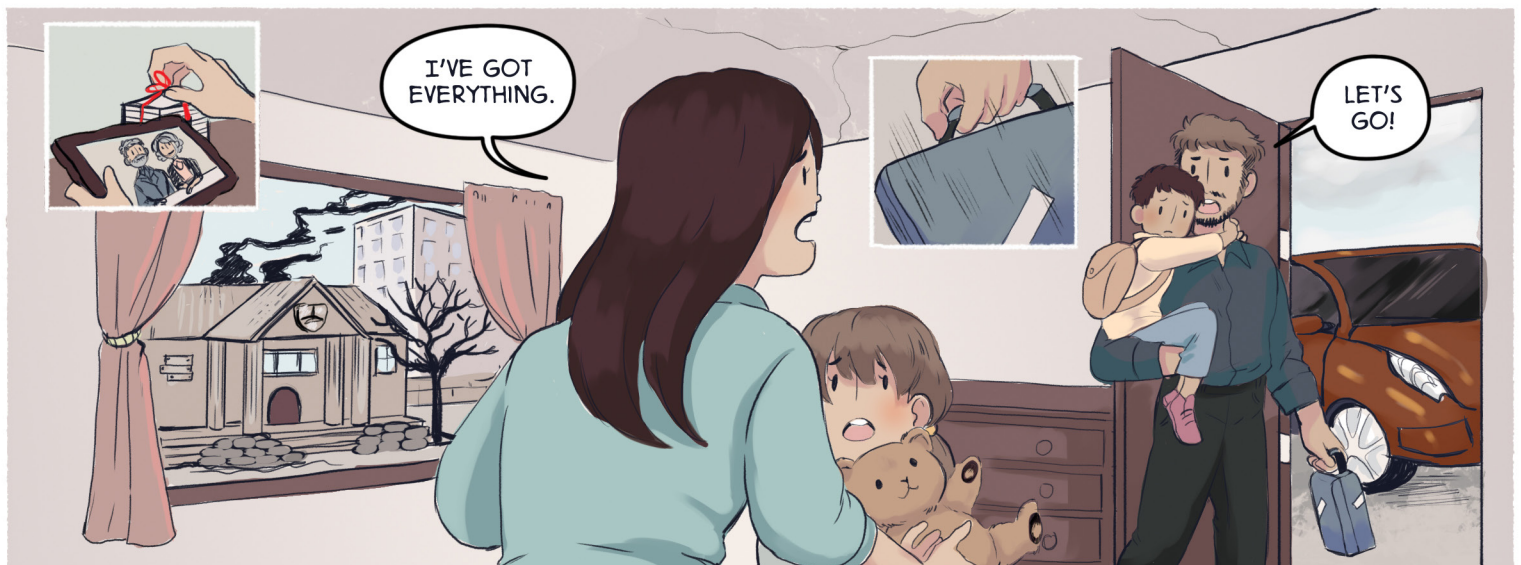
...AS WELL AS IN PERSONAL RECORDS.

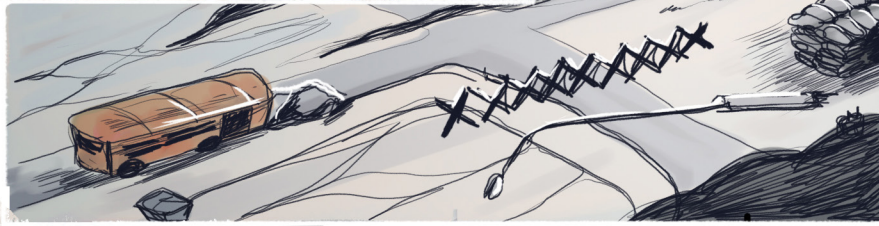
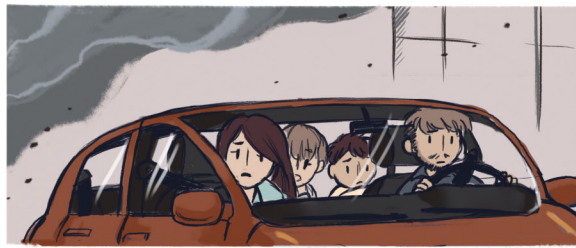


SOME ARCHIVES ARE EASIER TO MAINTAIN THAN OTHERS...



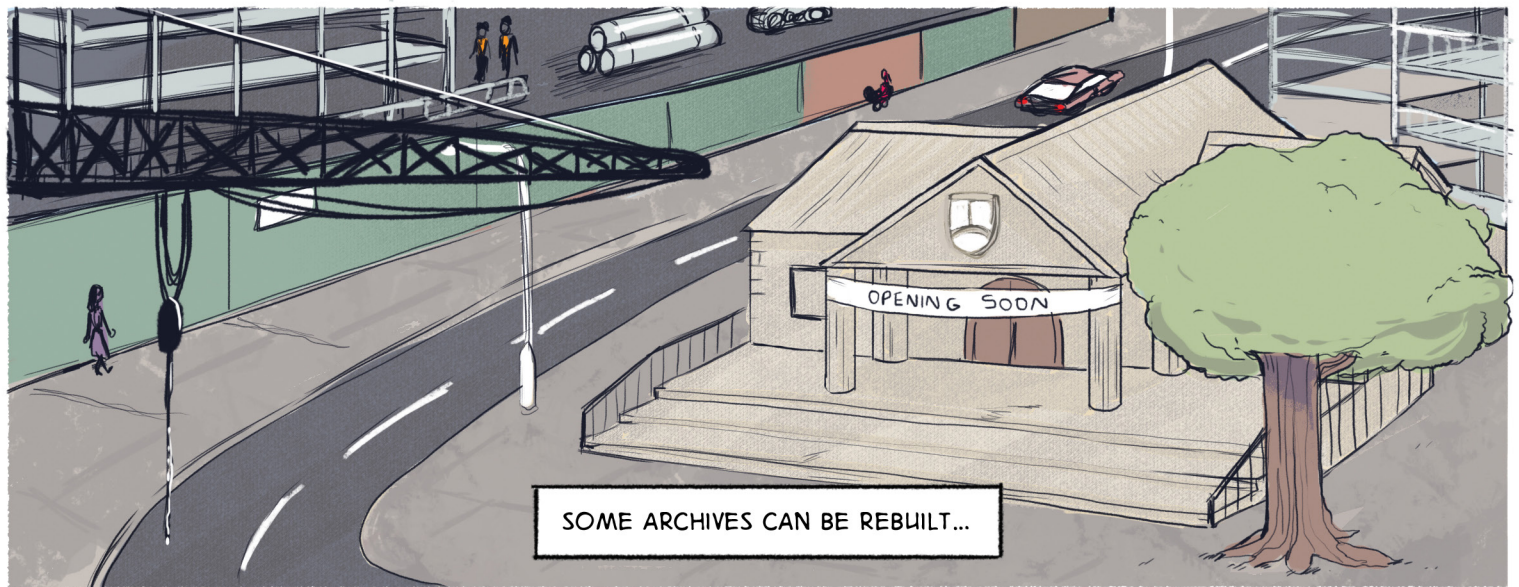
BREAKING NEWS - INVASION DEVASTATES CITY - CITIZENS FLEE THEIR HOMES IN TERROR





ARCHIVES TELL STORIES,
BUT SOMETIMES THEY CAN BE...





SOME ARCHIVES CAN BE REBUILT...

THAT WHICH IS LOST CAN
SOMETIMES BE RECOVERED.



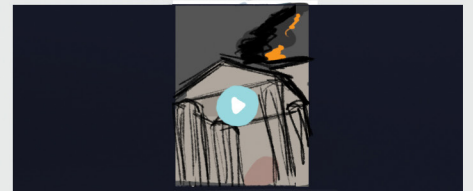
The violence continues here. I'm doing my best to record as much as I can.



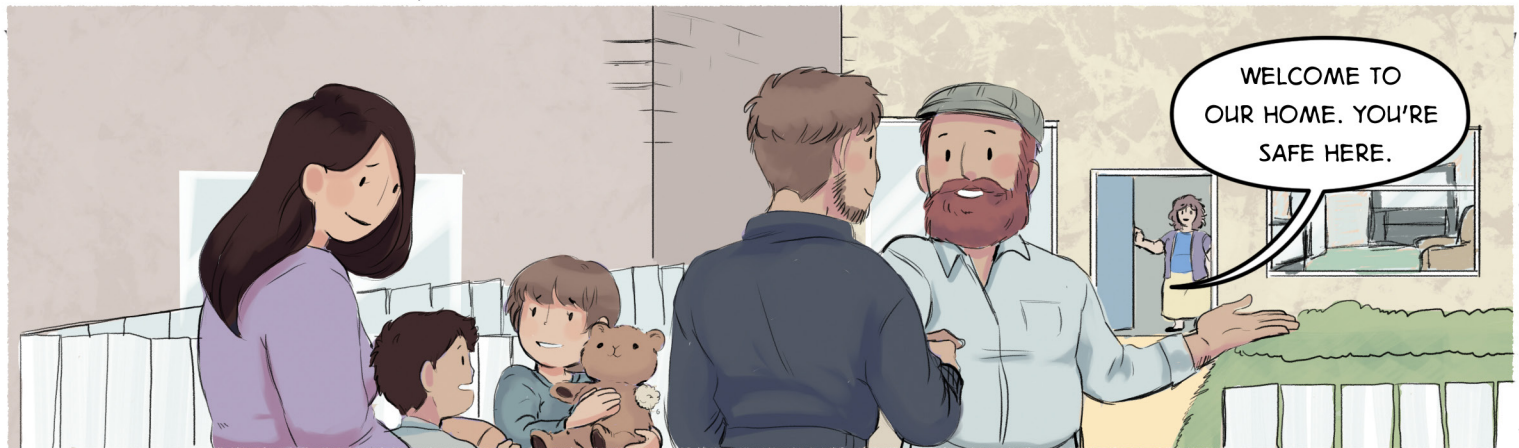
Can we use this footage in a report we're doing on the situation? This will make a big difference!

Yes of course you may!

Library archives under attack



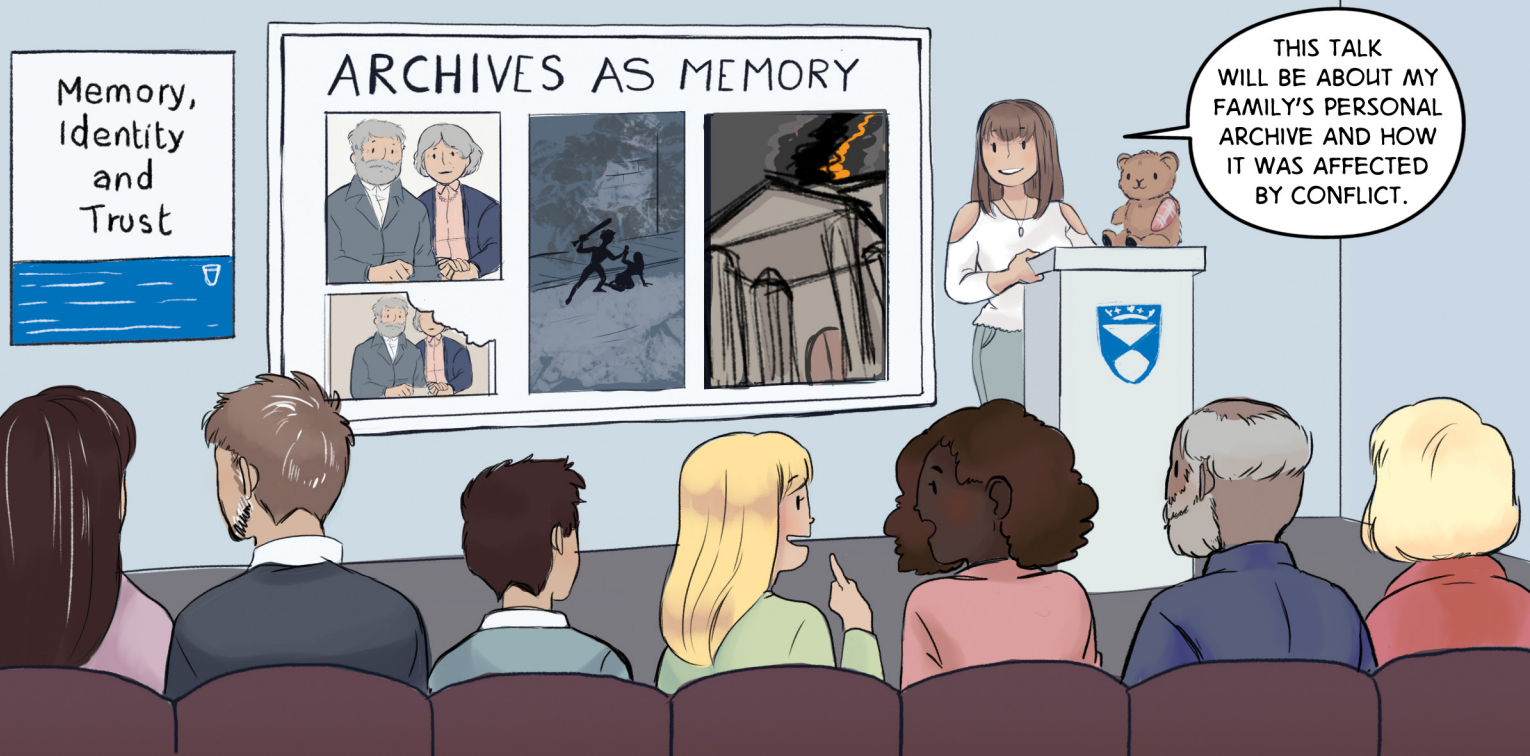
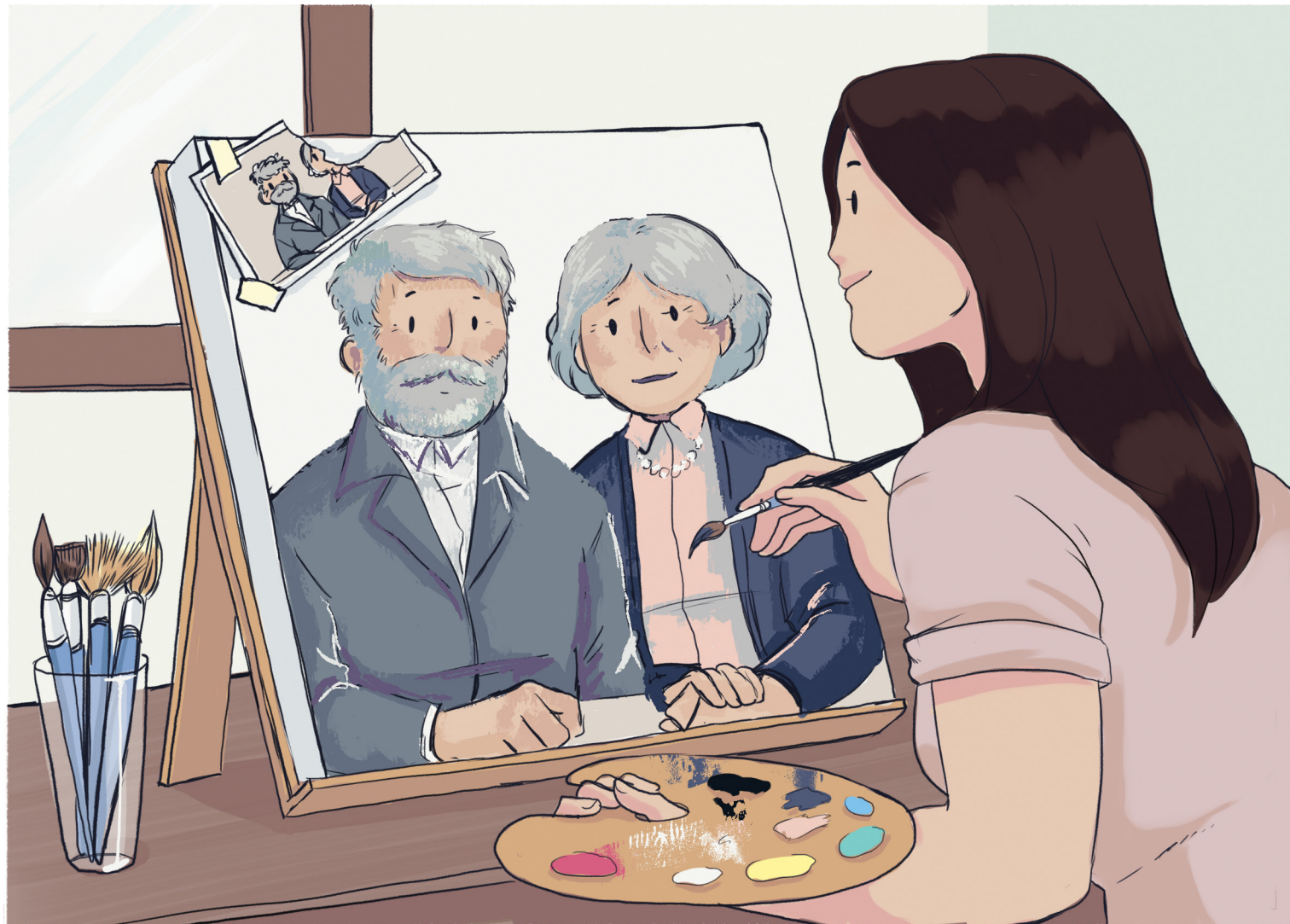
AND FIND NEW AUDIENCES.



IN THIS STORY, AS WITH OTHERS, PERSONAL AND CULTURAL ARCHIVES "SERVE AS A LIVING MEMORY OF THE MOMENTS, PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT MIGHT DISAPPEAR AND BE FORGOTTEN". (SABER & LONG, P. 92)*



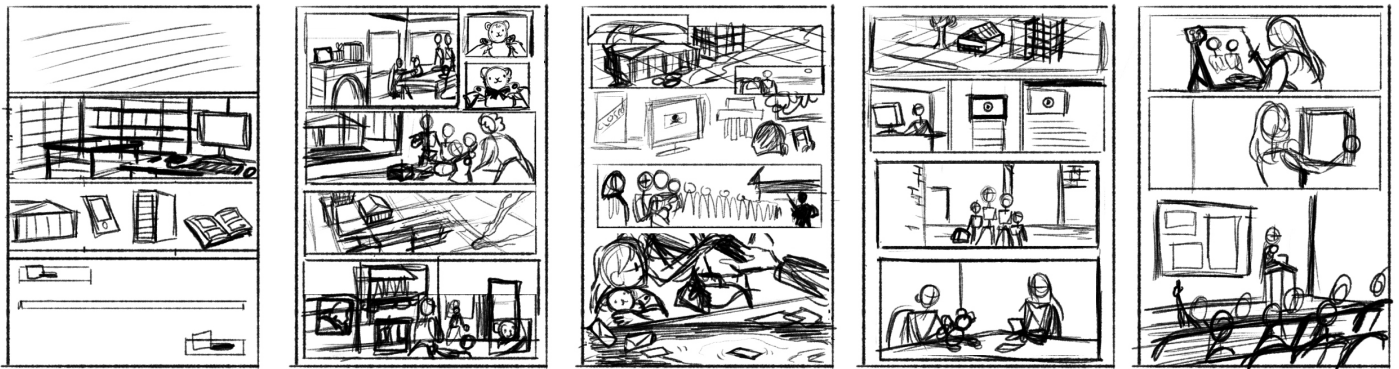
*Dima Saber and Paul Long. "I will not leave, my freedom is more precious than my blood". From affect to precarity: crowd-sourced citizen archives as memories of the Syrian war'. *Archives and Records* 38.1 (2017): 80-99.



PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

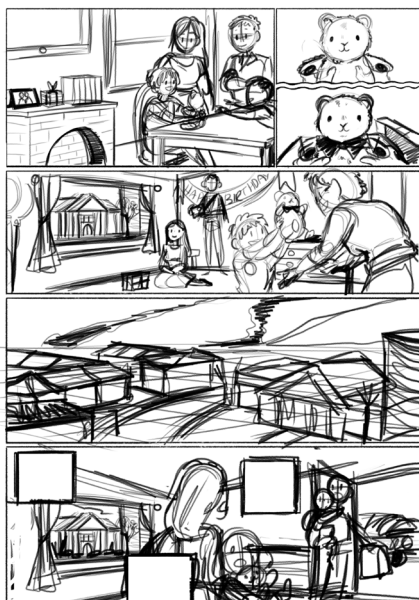
Writing about archives creates an archive of its own. Rather than render these records invisible, the process pages that follow show earlier versions of the script, thumbnail sketches, and other edits and drafts that led to the final version.

THUMBNAILS



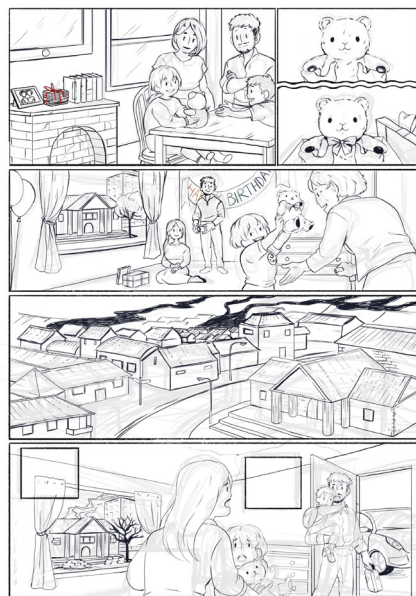
Thumbnails are the first step in composing a comic. These are small, rough versions of how the finished comic will look. They help give a sense of flow between panels and an idea of the basic panel composition.

The development of page two after the thumbnailing stage is further explained below as an example.



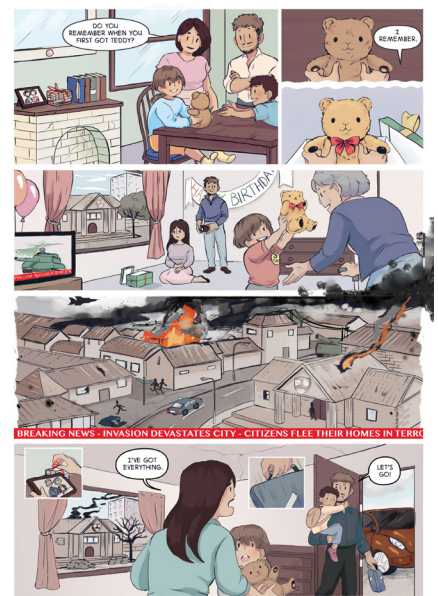
SKETCH

After the general layout is established from the thumbnails, sketching the individual panels begins. This helps others understand the drawings and if any changes need done it's clearer to communicate between artist and client.



INKS

When the initial composition is approved, inking begins. This can be done with pen and paper or digitally. The entire comic was digitally drawn from start to finish.



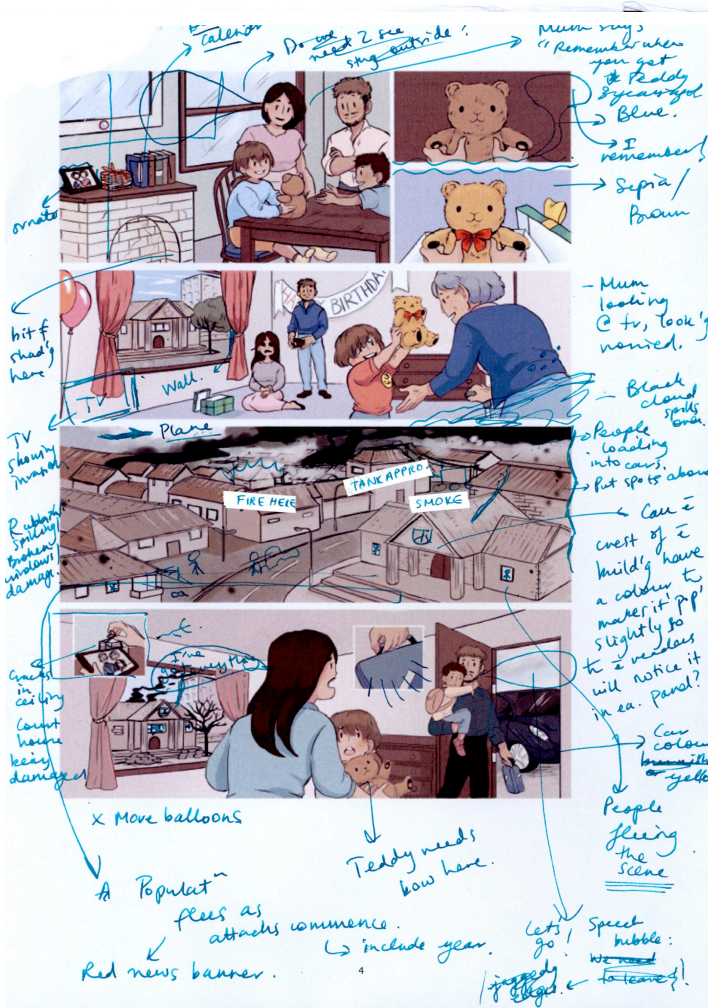
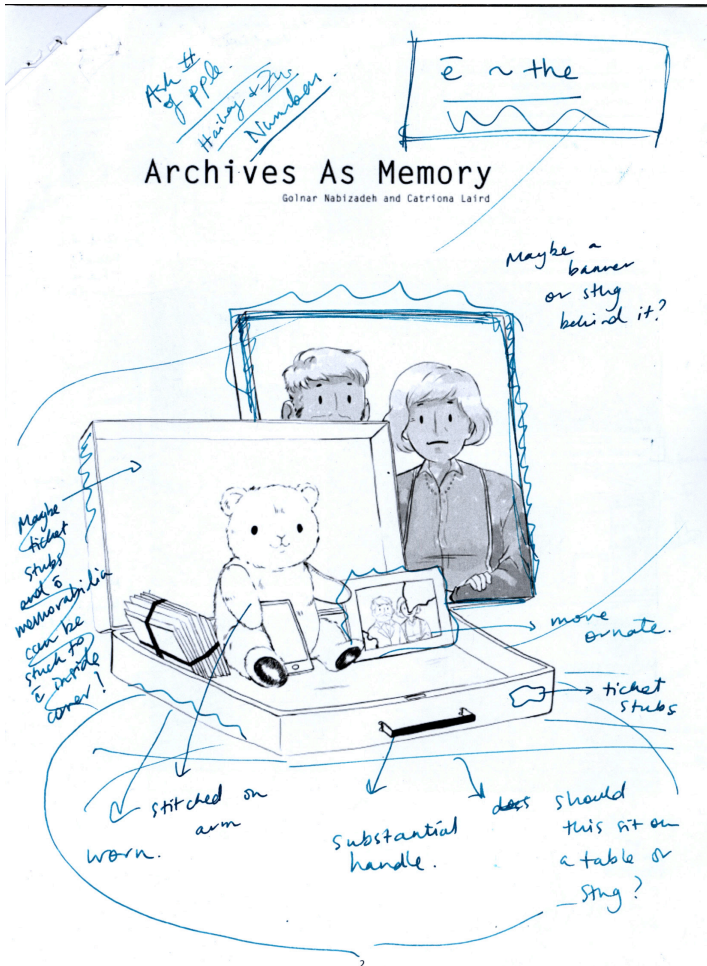
COLOUR

For this comic the colours were applied digitally and some details were painted over the top of the inks layer for a more painterly effect.

NOTES

Throughout the whole process notes are made on changes to colour, dialogue, composition and details because it is very hard to get it right the first time around, if not impossible. Physical notes on paper also help with continuity, if something is changed that needs to be consistent later on the parts that need changing can be circled for future notice.

The notes have created a record of every version of the comic there's been, from slight to major changes. These are a few examples of notes made on the cover, page two and page 3. Page 3 is particularly interesting as the final panel was removed and the panels involving recording of archive destruction were reordered and reframed towards the end of the project for a different inflection and clearer meaning within the narrative.



ARCHIVES AS MEMORY – SCRIPT

COVER PAGE

Montage arrangement of items from the story – teddy bear (with new arm), framed photograph of grandparents, mother's painting, letters tied up – perhaps sitting in the suitcase the family travels with, with an iPhone sitting alongside (and outside of?) the suitcase.

PAGE ONE

Panel 1

Long panel taking up the width of the page. Show OED entry for 'archive' – with the definitions (as noun and as a verb) highlighted in the style of Alison Bechdel's diary entries in Fun Home. Close up on the page:

Archive:-

noun: a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

verb: to place or store (something) in an archive.

Caption 1: The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'archive' as both a noun and a verb.

Caption 2: This comic is about archives, and how they may be created.

Panel 2

A library type setting, showing a shelf of books, and ranks of files, like we might see at the National Archives, with a computer closer to the foreground showing a catalogue on the screen. On the table next to the computer, draw some USBs, along with an external hard drive. Show some newspapers/periodicals in a display shelving unit in the mid-ground.

Caption 1: Archives can take many different forms...

Caption 2: ...composed of official records...

Panel 3

Montage panel divided showing the elements depicted in captions 1 and 2 (below).

Caption 1: ...stored in museums, online, data banks/servers...

Caption 2: ...as well as in personal records.

Panel 3

Montage panel divided showing the elements depicted in captions 1 and 2 (below).

Caption 1: ...stored in museums, online, data banks/servers...

Caption 2: ...as well as in personal records

Panel 4

Long panel taking up the width of the page with cascading tiles falling 'outward': in the main panel show a woman taking photographs of a group of friends, and a young woman recording what looks like a scene of violence on his phone. In the cascading tiles, show files being uploaded, downloaded, show progress bar, etc.

Caption: Some archives are easier to maintain than others...

PAGE TWO

Panel 1

A family of four (2 parents, boy and girl maybe 4 and 6 years old respectively) is seated around a table, talking and having tea. They look happy. The girl is holding a teddy bear of some kind, or placing it on the table. The teddy bear looks a little worn here. On a mantelpiece behind them, there is a partly damaged photograph in a frame – showing one set of grandparents. Next to the frame is a stack of letters, tied up with a ribbon, as well as books that look well-worn.

Panel 2

Zoom onto the girl picking the teddy bear up/out of box. The bear's fur is shiny and in brand new condition – story has moved back in time by 3 years.

Panel 3

Zoom out again to reveal that it's the girl's birthday, she and her family (without her little brother), and including the grandmother, are gathered round a different living room (with a different atmosphere to the living room in Panel 1). She is showing the bear to her grandmother. She wears a badge that says 'I'm 3 today'. There is a window with views to the outside. Through the frame, a white-ish building like the Dundee courthouse is visible.

Panel 4

Switch to exterior view, this time showing a residential area (45 degree crane shot), with some smoke in the background, showing that a threat/war has commenced. The courthouse is visible amongst the houses, and other buildings.

Panel 5

Long panel that takes up the rest of the page with three smaller panels (inset).

Show the family, now panicked, grabbing belongings in the front room of their house with the front door is open. From the window, smoke, and storm clouds create a sense of foreboding – courthouse has sandbags/debris scattered around it. Have three inset panels, showing each of the family members 'grabbing' an item: Father grabs a suitcase, Mother grabs the stack of letters, and photos, Girl grabs bear. The photograph at the top of the pile will be the same as the one sitting on the mantelpiece, above.

PAGE THREE

Panel 1

Shows family getting into a car, perhaps with an early morning atmosphere?

Panel 2

Takes up the full width of the page. Now it's daytime, though there are dark patches here and there caused by smoke. Reader is now encountering a war zone (maybe using Balkan region as a guide) with beautiful museum facades being destroyed on a main street, with natural monuments shelled. Crane shot perspective on this scene – a bit like Sacco, the streets look deserted.

Panel 3

Another panel showing family getting out of the car in a non-descript location, in a furtive manner. A darkened sky sets the ominous tone, and establishes the passing of time in relation to the family's journey.

NB: the panel arrangement for 1 – 3 would take up around half a page:



Panel 4

A full width panel, no borders, with montage elements arranged in a non-linear arrangement. The panel depicts with a 'closed' sign across the door. A computer screen showing data being wiped by a virus (indicated by skull and crossbones), and personal files being discarded after a death – perhaps by someone administering the estate (i.e. not a family member). Paper documents being shredded. Also show a woman recording a scene of destruction on her phone. This is also a montage sequence, and maybe in the background, there could be a bomb explosion on a building to show the active destruction of archives/artefacts?

Panel 5

Show the family waiting in a queue with other refugees, with a border crossing in the distance (and official looking personnel – if possible to fit them in). Show the same woman from Panel 4 also in the queue.

Panel 6

The family now speaks to official looking people (i.e. border police), looking exhausted, their belongings are clearly visible, especially the girl with her bear (to show the passage of archives between borders/crossings). Some of the photos/letters are have been dropped and are being blown away – this can bleed over into the space of the gutter and kind of fade out?

PAGE FOUR

Panel 1

Full width panel. Show the same city, with lots of ruins, but also showing signs of regeneration. Show some trees from the first city-scape taller in this one to show the passage of time. Show the courthouse with a banner, 'Opening Soon', tied between two of its columns. This scene is meant to get the reader thinking about the space of the city/physical spaces as a form of archive.

Caption: Some archives can be rebuilt...

Panel 2

Show the same woman who was also a refugee uploading the video at an internet café (she may have been processed but not necessarily ending up in the same place as the family). She wears the same scarf as in the previous drawing of her. The screen should show a still from the video – violent scene of conflict, being uploaded onto Twitter.

Panel 3

Show the video being picked up as a news story (this shows the same still, now framed as part of news story online)

Caption: ...and find new audiences.

Panel 4

Show the family arriving at a new home in an undisclosed location. Their faces look worn and sorrowful, but with visible relief. The scene shows them looking up at a new home as they stand outside. Girl looking at her bear, which is now missing an arm, and the shoulder has stuffing coming out. She looks sad/teary.

Panel 5

Show the girl, a bit older now, stitching a new arm onto her bear. The arm is made of the same fabric as the woman's scarf who was previously filming and in the queue. Girl looks happy. She is sitting at a table with her mother as she does this. Her mother appears thoughtful, as she looks at letters and/or photographs (they are scattered close by her on the table).

Caption: New materials can be added to established archives, to help piece together different stories.

PAGE FIVE

Panel 1 (half a page)

Show the mother looking more relaxed, and painting. She is painting a fresh version of a damaged photograph (the one of the grandparents), and the painting is in bright colours. The photograph sits next to the painting on an easel, showing the contrast between old and new. This image could be without borders, to convey an expansive sense of a new life/opportunities and creativity.

Panel 2

Mother hanging the finished painting on the wall with satisfaction.

Panel 3 (no border – takes up the remainder of the page)

The girl has now grown into a young woman – she is presenting her research at a public library, and she stands in front of an audience (which includes her family). A slide alongside her shows images (montage style) of archives from the war zone, including the woman's painting – to depict the collision and continued relevance of personal/private and public forms of archive. The slide has the title "Archives as Memory". The images on the slide can be recycled from the panels so far so readers can encounter the re-transmission of those images in a new setting. The bear is also present alongside the woman with its 'new' arm (or can be included as an image on the slide). The audience is culturally diverse and can show people pointing to something on the slide with interest, to make the reception scene lively (audience also stands in for the reader).

Script Notes

A script in raw form can have a lot of pitfalls and areas that need rounding off to make a solid narrative. One of the best solutions to this issue is to work with someone else to iron out the issues. Two minds are better than one at solving issues as shown in the examples below. Being able to visualise certain aspects of the comic earlier can help spark off ideas for further points in the story.

ARCHIVES PROJECT – SCRIPT

PAGE ONE

Panel 1

Long panel taking up the width of the page. Show OED entry for 'archive' – with the definitions (as noun and as a verb) highlighted in the style of Alison Bechdel's diary entries in *Fun Home*. Close up on the page.

archive definition multiply layer in by

noun: a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, or group of people.

verb: to place or store (something) in an archive.

Caption 1: The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'archive' as both a noun and a verb.
Caption 2: This comic is about what archives are, but also the things that are done to them...

Panel 2

A library type setting, showing a shelf of books, and racks of files, like we might see at the National Archives, with a computer closer to the foreground showing a catalogue on the screen. On the table next to the computer, draw some USBs, along with an external hard drive. Show newspapers/periodicals in a display shelving unit in the mid-ground.

Caption 1: Archives can take many different forms...
Caption 2: ...created through official records...

Panel 3

A panel divided diagonally (or smaller angle): top half shows the elements depicted in caption 1, and the lower half shows photographs, letters, emails, vintage dresses

Caption 1: ... stored in museums, online, data banks/servers...
Caption 2: ... as well as in personal records.

Panel 4

Long panel taking up the width of the page with cascading tiles falling 'outward' in the main panel show a woman taking photographs of a group of friends, an archivist creating a formal archive, and a young man recording what looks like a scene of violence on his phone. In the cascading tiles, show files being uploaded, downloaded, show progress bar, etc.

Caption: Some archives are easier to maintain than others...

PAGE TWO

Panel 1

A family of four (2 parents, boy and girl maybe 10 and 12 years old respectively) is seated around a table, talking and having tea. They look happy. The girl is holding a soft toy teddy of some kind, and it's a bit worn. The soft toy should be coloured brightly so it stands out in the panel. On a mantelpiece behind them, there is a

It is her birthday

Commented [CM1]: So, hand drawn text? I like Bechdel! This is quite exciting for an artist. Otherwise, you use a font, but that can look quite flat. Maybe apply a texture?

Commented [CM2]: You need a visual example here. Are you thinking of something from *Persepolis*?

Commented [CM3]: How would you know that was what was happening just from visuals?

Commented [CM4]: Reference to *The Arrival*?

Commented [CM5]: Should grandmother be in here?

Commented [CM6]: When is this set?

framed photograph – maybe in black and white, showing one set of grandparents. Next to the frame is a stack of letters, tied up with a ribbon, as well as books that look well-worn.

Panel 2

Zoom onto the soft toy but here looking new, and now in a sepia coloured setting to show that the scene has shifting to the past.

Panel 3

Zoom out, with the toy sitting on a shelf in the children's bedroom, show the children at a young age playing with their parents on the floor, and the grandmother watching this scene while standing in the doorway (or elsewhere in the room).

Panel 4

Zoom out again, this time showing a residential area (45 degree crane shot), with some smoke in the background, showing that a threat/war has commenced.

Panel 5

Long panel taking up the rest of the page with four inset/callout mini panels.

Show the family, now panicked, grabbing belongings in the front room of their house with the front door is open. From the window, smoke and general impression of war/conflict can be seen. Have four inset panels, showing each of the family members 'grabbing' an item. Father grabs a suitcase. Mother grabs photographs and a stack of letters. The photograph at the top of the pile will be the same as the one sitting on the mantelpiece, the stack of letters will end up on the mantelpiece in PAGE TWO, panel 1). Mother wears the same necklace in PAGE TWO, panel 1. Girl grabs the soft toy, and the boy grabs some wooden blocks.

PAGE THREE

Panel 1
Shows family getting into a car in a 'mini panel'

Panel 2

Takes up most of the full width of the page. Darkened city-scape depicts a scene (maybe using pre-war Lebanon as a guide) with beautiful museum facades being destroyed on a main street, with natural monuments shelled. Crane shot perspective on this scene – a bit like Sacco, with people running in panic.

Panel 3

Another mini-panel Show family getting out of the car in a non-descript location, in a furtive manner. A darkened sky sets the ominous tone.

Commented [CM7]: Does this work? That suggests a shift back in time of around 60-100 years, if the first scene is set in contemporary period?

Commented [CM8]: Would there be a window in previous panels to show the outside, and then some link to the external setting and the interior using a marker (a church, or some other old recognisable structure)?

Commented [CM9]: What is going on in the mini panels?

Commented [CM10]: Better if they aren't all grabbing photos. Perhaps father grabs something more practical, to contain the things others are grabbing.

Commented [CM11]: Is there enough room in the 'mini panels' to depict these complex actions?

Commented [CM12]: A cityscape and a crane shot showing people and a building are very difficult to combine. Too much is being asked for here. You need more panels to trace this out.

Commented [CM13]: Again, is there enough room in the 'mini panels' to depict these complex actions?

CONTRIBUTORS



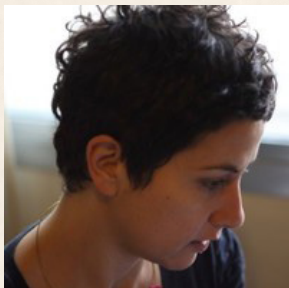
Dr Golnar Nabizadeh is **Lecturer in Comic Studies at the University of Dundee** where she teaches on the Comics & Graphic Novels MLitt, as well as undergraduate modules in Humanities. Her research interests include graphic justice, trauma and memory studies. She has published on the work of Alison Bechdel, Marjane Satrapi, Shaun Tan and the Australian online comic ***At Work in Our Detention Centres: A Guard's Story***, among others. She has thoroughly enjoyed writing her first comics script for this project!



Catriona Laird is a Scottish illustrator and comic artist. She graduated from DJCAD with a Bachelor's degree in illustration and was winner of the SICBA award for Up and Coming Talent 2017 for her comic ***Stinger*** which tackles the complex natures of phobias and the limitations of everyday life coping with one. Currently Catriona is a facilitator of classes run by the the **Dundee Comics Creative Space** and an artist from **Inkpot Studio**. She is working on her latest comic project ***Chimerical***, about a young alchemist and his monster companion.



Paul Long is a Professor of Media and Cultural History. He is currently researching the relationship of Student Unions and popular music culture in post-war Britain and writing a book on popular music heritage, memory and the archive. He is a trustee of the **Media Archive of Central England** and is particularly interested in the political economy of the archive and the affective dimensions of the archivist's role.



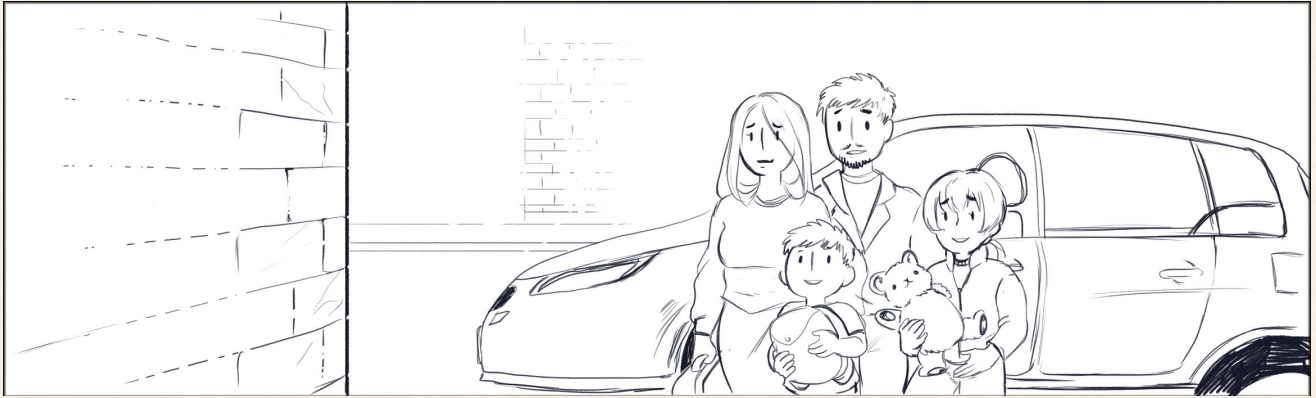
Dima Saber is Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research. She is also co-founder of **AltCity.me**, building the first open community newsroom and media innovation/startup lab in the Middle East and North Africa region. In 2009, Dima co-founded **Hibr.me**, a youth-powered alternative media outlet that aims at promoting media literacy, citizen journalism and critical thinking among young Lebanese students, writers and journalists.

Special Thanks

Thank you to Chris Murray who helped with the refining of the script and details for the artwork.

And for repeatedly suggesting we kill off the grandmother horrifically.





UniVerse

